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Unrelieved gloom

IRMELIN SANDMAN LILLIUS:
The Goldmaker's House
Illustrated by Ironicus
Translated by Marianne Helweg.
Oxford University Press. £2.95.
(0 19271401 5)

PATRICIA MILES:
The Gods in Winter
Hamish Hamilton. £3.25.
(241 89758 0)

The Goldmaker's House, the second
of Irnelin Sandman Lilius's
"Queen Sofia" trilogy, is a power-
ful and disturbing book. Vivid and
poetic language and a unique imagi-
nation combine to tell a strong
tale in which fantasy and reality,
joy and pain, are strangely juxtaposed.
The author's confrontation
of serious issues with total honesty
and lack of compromise makes
considerable demands on her
readers. It will move and disturb
them. But the book is disturbing in
a more profound sense. Its refusal
to clothe the pain at its centre, the
lack of any resolution of its central
problem, loses sight of an essential
difference between the role of the
children's writer and that of the
adult novelist.

The town of Tulavoll and its in-
habitants are familiar from the ear-
lier book, *Gold Crown Lane*. Once
again they are preoccupied with a
mystery. This time it centres round
the strange new inhabitant of Gri-
pander House. Who is he? Why
does he come from? What does he
do all day and far into the night?
Gossip and the wildest speculation
are rife. Only Bonadea, a young
orphan girl who takes up residence
in the house as Herr Turiam's
maid, discovers the truth. Herr
Turiam is an alchemist obsessed
with his lifelong search for the
magic stone that will turn all to
gold. Bonadea becomes his assistant
in the bizarre quest which brings
her into grave danger before the
search reaches its dramatic and
expected conclusion. Her courage
and determination lead her to new
awareness and insight into herself
and the world. Herr Turiam
departs, but Bonadea remains to
face a brighter and more hopeful
future.

There is a strange narrative in
which the strange enclosed world
of Gripander House is contrasted
with the everyday world of reality
down in the town. The two stories
run parallel, linked only by the
person of Bonadea, and with little

apparent connection between the
two sets of events. While the imagi-
nary and symbol of the fantasy,
complex and elusive, work power-
fully and coherently towards its
own conclusion, they relate only
obscurely to the events which have
overlaid the Hatter children, and
with which they must come to
terms. Whilst certain aspects of
their reality are illuminated
through the fantasy, its overall sig-
nificance, its internal confidence
and reassurance of hope for the
future, do not transfer easily or
convincingly to the other context.
Bonadea's words, drawn from her
own very different experience, have
little relevance or meaning for her
friend Silga grieving and guilt-
stricken over her Mother's aban-
donment of her and her sisters.
There is no comfort offered; no
reassurance for the future. For an
adult this is a stark enough realisation;
for children it must be an
unbearable prospect near to
despair. I am not asking for easy
solutions or quick answers which
relieve the truth of a book or
attack the author's integrity. But
surely there is some responsibility
on the writer for children to indi-
cate at least a way forward, some
resolution through which the child
can come to terms with the emo-
tional conditions and confronta-
tions with which the author has

Power pulls

NICHOLAS FISK:
Antigrav
Kestrel. £2.75 (7226 5322 0).

DAVID CHURCHILL:
It, Us and the Others
Heinemann. £2.40 (434 95825 5).

Nicholas Fisk has a gift for com-
bining the fantastic with the down-
to-earth. In books like *Grimm* and
Trillions, the interest comes not
merely from the central events, but
also from the effect of those events
on recognizable characters.

In his latest book, *Antigrav*, the
central idea is as ingenious as the
usual. A small boy, playing on a
beach, finds a toy which mysteri-
ously can exert an anti-gravitational pull
and his elder sister and their
friend, Train, realize the vast possi-
bilities of this free source of

power. The ensuing story is
moving and many readers will be
carried through by the pace of
action, which culminates in a
dramatic scene in which the child
uses this pull to escape from
their pursuers by flying down
the air in a rubber dinghy.

Thoughtful readers, however,
be worried by the larger im-
plications of the story. Rather
plausibly, it takes place in a
remote Scottish island where
children are on a camping holiday
with "The Science Institute".
Institute, which includes sci-
entists from both sides of the
Curtain. With disappointing prob-
ability, the pro-Communist sci-
entists kidnap the children in
attempt to steal the red pencil.
At this point, it looks as though
the story will turn into a high-tech
adventure with crude divisions be-
tween good and bad. But one of
the "Bad" scientists upsets the
balance by saying: "You think the
power of this little thing... safe
with your mum and dad... but
not so safe with the museum
and daddy of another coun-
try!... I shall tell you this: the
world is run by the strong!" As
result of this kind of thinking, the
children and their parents ap-
parently decide to throw away the
red pencil. The book ends with an
account of the defections and dis-
appearances which result from the
holiday.

What is disturbing about this is
its facile cynicism. Nicholas Fisk
raises important questions of sci-
entific morality, but he treats them
in a very superficial manner.
Moreover, in concentrating upon
this side of the story, he has sac-
rificed his usual mastery of narra-
tion of the children who are his
main characters and also much of
his customary humour.

It, Us and the Others, by David
Churchill, also has a science fic-
tion theme, but his story is told
within the small compass of a boy
and a girl, and a dog, and a
relationship between them. It is
a beautiful, wonderful crea-
ture lying in the grass where
Andy goes fishing. Andy returns to
the "Others".

The supernatural machines on
lost worlds and it is never clear if
the two are dealing with magic or
with extra-terrestrial science, but
this is entirely appropriate. It is
the book confines itself to a
series of experiences of Andy and Jill
and the way in which their relation-
ships develop as a result. Their prob-
lems are handled realistically and
unsentimentally. The story is a
short one, and once again,
which is a short story, a fine
judged piece of storytelling, right
from the beginning when Andy realizes
there is an intelligence on the
other end of his fishing line.

Judith Vidal Hall

Internal logic

URSULA MORAY WILLIAMS:
Bogwoppit
Illustrated by Shirley Hughes
Hamish Hamilton. £3.75.
(241 89760 2)

BARBARA SLEIGHT:
Carbonel and Callidor
Illustrated by Charles Front
Kestrel. £3.25. (7236 5418 9)

Invented creatures do not neces-
sarily make good fantasy, and magic
is, in both senses, even trickier.
Ursula Moray Williams and Bar-
bara Sleight turn up good examples
of the two genres, the fantastic and
the magical, showing how both
must be based on an iron precision
(of sorts), a kind of consistency
that applies in everyday life, and
does not, whatever the odd
circumstances, let you down.

Bogwoppit is about a breed of
extinct creatures living only in the
marshes, drains and palatial sewers
of Illis Green Park where Lady
Clanmorris, keeps the villagers at bay with
dogs and the bogwoppits with
disinfectant. My point about
consistency and precision is shown
by the fact that if one didn't
believe every word Mr. Price the
plumber has to say about the
drains and sewers one might not,
perhaps, believe in bogwoppits,
who are both furry and feathery,
web-footed and rat-tailed, who
swim and who (more or less) fly,
and first appear as tadpole-like
creatures on the water. The
marshes in the park, Mr Price feels
for drains as Dr Muffet felt for
spiders or any enthusiast feels for
the object of his enthusiasm, and
somehow engenders belief not just

in their labyrinthine glory under
the park but in their inmates, the
supposedly extinct bogwoppits.
Lady Clanmorris's niece Samantha
is a heroine full of zeal, spunk and
independence, with more than a
touch of her aunt's dotiness, and
Shirley Hughes's illustrations have
just the right degree of boldness
in both humans and bogwoppits.
This is unmagical fantasy. You
have simply to accept one premise;
the rest follows with total logic
and exactness, and with a kind of
merry lunacy that's good, I think,
for the often prim literary sensibi-
lities of the young.

Barbara Sleight's presence is less
powerful, therefore less compelling
and convincing. And her young
heroine and hero, Rosemary and
John, are not really very interest-
ing people to have adventures
with, even when they fly up to the
ceiling or ride their broomstick
over a vivid patchwork landscape.
The children, while living quite a
credible life with an antique-deal-
ing uncle and his bookselling
friend, are involved in an anthropo-
morphic world of cats, in which
rivalries are sorted out in human
terms of courtship, marriage, and
gang warfare; a magic ring allows
them to communicate directly with
the cats and hear what they are say-
ing. Rosemary seems like promising
witch material, but shies away
from "that evil mixture of foolish-
ness and twisted wisdom, of greed
and power and riches" and the
final confrontation between her
two natures is resolved in terms of
sleepwalking and the subconscious.
She and John put away their
magic, the road is banished to Tim-
buctoo, the evil witches are purged
and become ordinary old ladies.
Woman's Institute members, and
cat-lovers all.

Isabel Quigly

Childhood haunts

CHRISTOPHER LEACH:
Rosalinda
Dent. £3.50. (460 06827 X)

FREDERICK GRICE:
Johnny-Head-In-Air
Oxford University Press. £2.50.
(19 271423 6)

The interplay between past and
present is endlessly fascinating, not
least because in an age where more
and more can be accounted for
scientifically, it still remains unex-
plained, elusive and mysterious.

Beneath the sentimental cover of
Rosalinda, by Christopher Leach,
lies a ghost story light on texture
but ominously powerful in
suggestion. It is related by the
seventeen-year-old heroine, Anne,
whose parents are the new care-
takers of a Dorset mansion, until
recently the home of the War-
render family. While helping to
prepare the house for its first
official opening to the public, Anne
becomes mesmerized by the por-
trait of a young girl, painted two
centuries earlier. A local historian
tells her that this was Rosalinda
Warrender, a daughter of the
house, who at the age of seventeen
was drowned in a nearby mere. It
soon becomes horrifyingly clear to
Anne that the dead girl is trying to
take over her own identity and
personality, in a desperate attempt
to perpetuate the life which was so
tragically cut short. The
strength of the book lies in the
author's own tacit acknowl-
edgement of the power of the past. "We
live by courtesy of the past," he
quotes, and we get the feeling that
he knows better than to start
manipulating his ghost: he holds
the reins but the pace and the
direction are not his to control.
The climax of the story is spine-
chilling and the denouement far
more wholly credible.

By comparison, *Johnny-Head-In-
Air* seems a tame affair, which is
good because Frederick Grice is a
better and well-tried author, and a
better writer, stylistically, than
Christopher Leach. He sets his
story in the 1920s and once again,
the scene is a large country house
in which the thirteen-year-old hero,
Leonard Vincy (an unfortunate
and quite unnecessary pun) spends
a summer vacation, while his
father keeps his eye on the prop-
erty for its absent owner. The
ghost of this time is a young man
whose photograph bears an un-

easy resemblance to Leonard, and
who died thirty years before in a
Leonardo-type flying machine
which he endeavoured to launch
from the grounds of the house.
The broken remains of the contrap-
tion are hidden away in an out-
building and Leonard persuades the
old handyman, Henry, to repair
them and put the machine into
working order for him. The first
flight is a disaster, not only for
Leonard but for the story, which
from that point on deteriorates
into melodrama of the silliest kind.
This does Frederick Grice no sort
of justice. His writing is never
spectacular but it has proved itself
over the years to be sensitive,
absorbing and sure in craftsman-
ship and will doubtless do so again.

Ann Evans

Powers that be

MARGARET ROGERS:
Cindy and the Silver Enchantress
Illustrated by Riana Duncan
Andersen. £2.50. (905478 36 3)

CHARLOTTE MORROW:
The Rain Woman
Blackie. £3.25. (216 90380 7)

To attempt the use of magic can be
as dangerous for a writer as for a
magician. It gives the illusion of
freedom, and of an easy source of
power; but the power is hard to
summon, and the laws that govern
it are rigid.

Cindy and the Silver Enchantress
falls completely. It is an irritat-
ingly arch story, about a whimsical
girl and potential for magic like
her own; but the extent of Bryn's
power is ill-defined, and it may
be the most serious flaw in the
book. The book has many themes
that touch but never blend; the
limbs at links with ancient legend
carry no conviction; the imagery is
too vague. The real life and strength
is in the author's creation of Bryn,
the evocation of the East Anglian
landscape, and most of all in the
changing relationship between Jenny
and her father, George Cos, a slow
careworn smallholder gathers in-
creasing interest and sympathy, and
in Jenny's reconciliation to him, to
her home and to herself, lies the
book's true drama.

There are improbabilities too in
Charlotte Morrow's *The Rain
Woman*—such as the scarcely
hidden treasure which has some-

New worlds

JUDY ALLEN:
The Dream Thing
Hamish Hamilton. £3.25.
(241 89836 6)

RODIE SUDBERY:
Somewhere Else
André Deutsch. £3.25. (213 96974 8)

The Dream Thing is filled with
lively and interesting characters
and easy-going school and com-
munity life, but Jen, the
heroine, withdraws more and
more into her private world.
She is racked with resentment that
her father, killed before she was
born, was a gypsy, and her feelings
are exacerbated by cruel teasing
at school.

This being so, she is horrified
when Travlers set up an encamp-
ment on local common land. From
then on she has nightmares about
an amorphous and increasingly
threatening creature. Aches and
pains in the daytime further con-
vince her that a curse has been
laid on her.

Slightly underhand means she
succeeds in involving the police and
the local authority in an aggressive
attempt to clear the camp. This
adds gull to her already turbulent
emotions. Her mother, showing
more understanding than one would
expect given their tetchy relation-
ship, forces Jen to confront the
gypsy grandmother, who convinces
Jen that her state is the result of
her own hatred and confusion, not
the product of sorcery. But she
and women is vindictive rather than
comforting and Jen is no nearer to
solving her problem.

The Dream Thing should be
recommended with caution. Young
children will find it disturbing and
might well end up with a prejudice
against gypsies.

Somewhere Else asks the reader
to accept the scarcely credible pre-
mise that a boy and girl can share
a fantasy induced by the same
hallucinogen. Bruce's father was
a neurotic who took his own life
and his mother harrides him with
her anxiety and constant domestic
demands. Bruce finds some
brightly coloured seeds in their
neglected allotment and, gazing
intently at them, is transported to
a tropical island. Deena, a school
friend, comes to him and finds ac-
cidentally on the same island, where
Bruce does his best to destroy her. They
discover that eating even one seed
has dangerous effects, and fantasy
almost turns into tragedy when six-
year-old Stephen swallows several.
As one would expect from Rodie
Sudbery, the darker parts of the book
are about juvenile relationships and
conversations. She is always ex-
tremely readable and convincingly
portrays harassed mothers and irri-
tated children.

Cecilia Gordon

Oxford's summer choice



Hunt the Thimble

Written and illustrated by Fiona French
Set in 17th-century Amsterdam, this full colour picture-book
describes the fun two children have searching for a thimble
hidden by their young brother. £2.50

River

Illustrated by Charles Keeping
The artist's beautiful pictures show the changes wrought on
a basic landscape by the seasons and by the activity of Man;
but in the end, Nature is never wholly eclipsed. £3.25

Johnny-Head-In-Air

by Frederick Grice
Leonard, on holiday in a lonely country mansion, finds his
whole life is changed when he discovers the remains of a
man-powered flying machine and a photograph showing
that it once really did fly. £2.50



Silas and the Black Mare

by Cecil Bodker
Illustrated by Julek Heller
Set in an unnamed country at an unnamed time, these are
the adventures of a most extraordinary boy called Silas:
extraordinary in manner, in appearance, in past history,
and in present behaviour. £2.95

Daniel

by Gregory Harrison
Illustrated by Francis Scholes
A talking donkey called Daniel runs away from the seaside
donkey farm, and gets into all sorts of trouble before he
finds some kind new owners. £2.95

After the Ark

by Elizabeth Jennings
In this collection, a distinguished poet reveals her deep
feeling for the animal world by giving voices to various
creatures in which they make a plea for a better
understanding of their own freedom. £2.50

Oxford
University
1978 Press

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Fiction for Older Children

Rosalinda

CHRISTOPHER LEACH
Anne, a seventeen-year-old girl, becomes involved with
the personality of Rosalinda, who died in 1786 at the
age of seventeen. On finding Rosalinda's diary, she
discovers the reason for her early death...
'a compelling, haunting, tale that should delight all
women (and some men) from the age of about eleven
upwards.' Books & Bookmen. £3.50

Tyto The Odyssey of an Owl

GLYN FREWER
'A book that is packed full of detail about the life of a
barn owl.' Living. £3.50

Zany magic is central to Chris-
tine Nostlinger's plot and keep

Mary Cadogan

Gillian Cross

DENT

From fantasy to fiction

ARTHUR N. APPLEBEE:
The Child's Concept of Story
Ages Two to Seventeen
University of Chicago Press. £7.00.
(226 60122 6)

In 1962, D. W. Harding, discussing the psychological processes in the reading of fiction, said, "the full grasp of fiction as fiction is a sophisticated achievement. Children come to it gradually, and although little seems to be known about the steps by which they reach it, we can plausibly suppose that the phase on 'lying' fantasy, that many children go through is one stage in the process."

Little by little the stages in a child's understanding of what stories are have been uncovered by the painstaking, if not always riveting, researches of those who locate human fictiveness in the broader areas of psychology and language. We know that fantasy has its roots in play, in the nature of the mind and in language varieties. Children learn about stories by telling them, in pre-sleep word-play, in make-believe and day-dreams, in conversation with toys and animals. They learn songs and story rhymes and proceed to reading. Narrative is a primary organization of human experience, linking remembrance of things past to expectations of events to come. All this which we have always known from introspection is now demonstrable in other ways.

The distinction between stories and other kinds of telling becomes important when the facts of experience in going about the world are called truth, and the play activity of "making it up" is given the lesser status of fiction or fantasy. As we know from Elsie Plann's perplexity about Tom Sawyer's lies, there is a period in childhood when "is it true?" becomes the all-important question. Yet Barbara Hardy, Bertelshelm, Winnicott and J. N. Britton have made it abundantly

clear that our need for story-telling persists throughout our lives so that we may extend the possible in experience. We never outgrow our need for stories. We simply respond to them differently and learn to tell the best of them later.

By drawing upon Harding's idea of make-believe, "whether it takes the form of play with companions, of drama or of fiction", as "imaginary spectatorship in a social setting", Arthur Applebee makes a powerful synthesis of cognitive psychology (Piaget and Kelly) and the spectator role in language (this mentor here is J. N. Britton) to show the developmental interaction of children and literature. As the book is a reversion of a distinguished doctoral thesis, the theoretical chapters are densely packed, and the argument assumes in the reader a certain familiarity with the quoted sources. One can pick a way through without becoming enmeshed in the analysis of empirical data. But it is this "hard" material that separates out this study from most of its predecessors. Dr Applebee's scholarship does justice to the acknowledged complexity of his subject.

By the age of two and a half children can use language to shape experience. The primary conventions of narrative lurk in the pre-sleep monologue. By five, children take characters from stories they hear and weave them into those they tell, so that by six they have clear expectations of witches and fairies, lions and wolves.

Yet for all their familiarity with the conventions of story-telling children are nearly nine before they differentiate story experience from direct experience of the real world, and know that they cannot really visit Cinderella. The story mode of experience is a powerful extension of the actual, making it possible for those who can encompass it to live their lives forward, to anticipate events and to go back over experiences they never had. It is

this possibility, this dimension of feeling and knowing, that differentiates those children who enjoy reading, and willingly do it, from those who have never understood what reading is all about.

To show how response to literature evolves as "the product of an internal personal slow process of assimilation and accommodation, a process which cannot in principle be described by reference to publicly verifiable conventions", Dr Applebee uses a Piagetian model to describe the "stages in the way children represent their spectator-role experiences to themselves and others". The technical details deserve close attention because they make clear the moves from the simple retelling of a story, through the summarizing of the plot or theme, to a much later differentiation of objective and subjective responses and the precise formulation of criteria for assessing rhetoric, style and structure in a work of literature. Not to belabour the point, an eight-year-old telling "what happens next" may be giving the best evaluation of a story he can. The later stages of understanding are built on the earlier ones, until there evolves an awareness of fiction as "an accepted technique for discussing the chances of life". Dr Applebee is convinced that literary experience depends on the mastery of the underlying conventions which govern the exchange between author and audience, "the patterns of development found in the present study certainly do not suggest that encounters with literature or juvenile literature are any less than later encounters with more sophisticated works".

What mystery remains? For all certainties, there is still no secure pattern of the development of feeling, or quantifiable data of the extent to which a child's way of looking at the world is modified by what he reads. Sometimes the "no stone unturned" type of research is unattractive to those who see in investigations of this kind the death of spontaneity in dealing with the interaction of children and literature. But one has only to look at the survey, or more research, based on counting book titles, to realize how soft, unfounded and impressionistic are most of our views of children's growth in literature.

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Reading with mother

SIMON WATSON:
The New Red Bike and Other
Stories for the Very Young
Illustrated by Charlotte Vouke
Heinemann. £2.90. (434 97165 0)

HANS ANDRUEUS:
Mr Humblemouse Omnibus
Illustrated by Babs van Wely
Translated by Patricia Crampton
Abelard-Schuman. £2.65.
(200 72533 5)

BEN LUCIEN BURMAN:
High Treason at Catfish Bend
Illustrated by Alice Caddy
Kestrel. £2.75. (7226 5427 8)

There is a school of story writing for the under-fives that could be called a day in the life of a small child. The more exact the account of the visit to the swings, or to aunt's, or a morning at the shops, the better they succeed. These stories form an indispensable reservoir for reading aloud on the radio or at play groups, because they hold the attention, for the moment, of all the children. They have an appeal, to all of the children, all of the time, because they are about what is known and secure. Of course this is important. But the more they succeed in capturing the routine, the more they are indistinguishable from it, and therefore, like it, quite unmemorable.

The New Red Bike is very well written with beautifully accurate dialogue between Wallace and his parents, and is daring for the genre, but is definitely of it. Wallace is a little boy whose life is made up of having breakfast, buying new shoes, feeding the birds. The stories carry realism to new lengths: the cat makes a mess in the sandpit, and Daddy's preoccupation while making the breakfast is very closely observed. But in the end, it is only the realism of a Ladybird Book illustration in which the conventions

have been updated. It has the tone of unsurprising conservatism.

Mr Humblemouse is quite a fervent matter. The stories are an attempt to be realistic, a poorly schooled sort, kindly, and with enormous range of talents, including the ability to talk to blackboards, to understand problems of park benches or unruly ghosts to lead quiet and deductive lives. However, from as they are in a quiet Dutch style, the stories manage somehow to be overloaded by fantasy. It is a combination which gives them charm. The illustrations are perfect, witty and restrained.

Simon Watson's stories are well written for small children, and the Mr Humblemouse adventures are irreverent and unselfconscious. The adventures of the Catfish Kid are of a different kind again. They come from an ancient, adult tradition, and because the story is about rule-making, it is carried along with a tremendous brisk pace, it is well as a children's book. Lucien Burman's earlier books have been compared with Kestrel, but this one at my age, not in that class. High Treason at Catfish Bend is The Great Wrath rewritten with a cast of swamp animals. Lured by peace of better living in California, it undergoes risks and hardships, and the story is one of the things he needs to escape. The story begins with his mother suggesting he studies "in front of the television. It'll be your mind off what you're doing. She is the adult, and even TV kids themselves will realize that's a rather appalling Mum speaking. Alfie's brother Bubba is rather appalling too, and when Alfie hears that he has lost his job and is coming with his gum-popping wife to live in the family attic, Alfie rebels. The attic is his special place where he cuts himself off from TV, Mum and the old-fashioned routine of his grand-father. Up there he can draw his cartoons. He looks himself in.

For nearly half the book, Alfie is alone, silent, defending his territory. When he finally hears his mother, that his brother is not coming after all, he feels no happiness, no triumph.

Only his cartoons finally assuage the hurt. For some children, this

to bed, Mrs Lambert, who is here on holiday with Mr Lambert, never says anything. She looks a little tired.

For all that, Anthea Bell's translation has caught the schoolboy argot, and the stories bounce along. If somewhat crudely at times. It is rather a pity that for once Goscinny's aim is not quite as sure as that of Sempé.

If Nicholas's nice line in male chauvinism is unlikely to appeal to the supporters of non-sexist books, Beverly Cleary's neatly drawn Ramona might. Ramona and her father pulls off the difficult trick of keeping in a second-grader's viewpoint without being condescending or "cute". Ramona is a distinct, if not particularly distinctive character, and in coping with her father losing his job, or persuading him to give up smoking, she is both quietly humorous and immensely real. Her reaction when she is told off for coming home late and wet is typical:

She stood dripping on the linoleum a moment, expecting hurt feelings to take over, perhaps even to make her cry a little so her family would be sorry they had been mean to her. But her wonder, and the simple stolid there, cold, dripping, and feeling good. She felt good from making a lot of noise, she felt good from the hard work of walking so far on her tin-can stilts... she felt good from being out after dark with rain on her face and the streetlights shining down on her.

With its interesting American setting, close observation, and its feeling for the feelings of childhood, Ramona and her Father is a very pleasant book; but what perhaps gives it its only its honest commitment to a single author-child relationship.

Peter Hunt

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Problem parents

BEVSY BYARS:
The Cartoonist
Valley Head. £2.75. (370 30104 8)

HANS-ERIC HELLBERG:
I Am Maria
Illustrated by Trevor Stumbley
Translated by Patricia Crampton
Wideman. £3.50. (416 85110 X)

PETER HARTLING:
The Runes Away
Illustrated by V. and F. Schmidt
Translated by Anthea Bell
Andersen Press. £2.50. (905478 355)

Bevsey Byars is a regular producer of short accessible children's novels of considerable originality. If, for many of her admirers, she has never produced a story to equal her first delightful *The Midnight Fair* (1970), she has never run dry or seemed to be churning out books to fulfil a contract rather than an imaginative impulse. A reviewer in these pages once characterized her as having made a special corner for herself in the leading of growing rapport between adults and children, and certainly in her books the adults are frequently important. But here is the latest one, *The Cartoonist*, which is no repeat, only alienation.

For Alfie the hero, unlike his predecessor Lennie *The TV Kid*, television is one of the things he needs to escape. The story begins with his mother suggesting he studies "in front of the television. It'll be your mind off what you're doing. She is the adult, and even TV kids themselves will realize that's a rather appalling Mum speaking. Alfie's brother Bubba is rather appalling too, and when Alfie hears that he has lost his job and is coming with his gum-popping wife to live in the family attic, Alfie rebels. The attic is his special place where he cuts himself off from TV, Mum and the old-fashioned routine of his grandfather. Up there he can draw his cartoons. He looks himself in.

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Hodder & Stoughton



Tales of the real world

"Simple, natural stories about children of today living together in a multi-racial community. What could sound more like a declaration of intent from the series to which *Kate's Party* and *Spud Comes to Play*, both by Joan Solomon, belong? There is at last appreciation in the world of children's books, in the illustrations of new story books and textbooks, that there are children of various colours as well as shapes and sizes. This trend will reassure anyone who has been concerned about the disturbing results of research into what happens to black children when they read stories featuring only white characters. Sociologists frequently refer to the poor self-image black children develop because they are exposed to so much derogatory or patronizing material about themselves. It is more worrying is the confusion some of them feel when they do not see their own images reproduced anywhere and the denial of their identity which can follow: there was plenty of evidence from America of negro children trying to rub the black off their hands and faces. In addition to not being nice it sometimes does not seem natural to be black. In our own schools the roots of disadvantage are many but there is little incentive to excel in a culture which does not seem to acknowledge, let alone value your existence.

The photographs of real six-year-olds with real names in real places which fill the pages of these two books are a change for the better. They certainly engage the interest more than the "Janet and John" type of illustrations of white suburban middle-class families. The nuclear middle-class family in its tidy semi-detached house with Kity and Rover sporting on the neat lawn. These children have names like Montrose, Berron and Vinod as well as Kate and Mark.

But although these books look more suitable for children of today the texts offer little cause for enthusiasm. At least fifteen pages there was in the Ladybird series a similar book to *Kate's Party*. It, too, was about going to a party where there were balloons and games, six candles on the cake and everyone had a lovely time. It is sad to report that I remember

feeling exactly the same doubts about the content of that innocuous work as I do about *Kate's Party*. Mary, the Marks and Spencer sweaters photographed in the new story will make it easier for more children to identify with the characters than the bar shoes for the girls and the ties for the boys in the old book. You can at least imagine someone bursting a balloon at Kate's party even if there is no hint that anyone could burst into tears and opt out of the whole business. But these are superficial improvements which obscure the main question: why would anyone want to read this book? Who could be enthralled, extended, mystified, warmed or even interested in a story in which nothing at all really happens? "Ha, we pulled harder," laughs Karen "in the tug of war as everyone tumbles over." "What would Betty Berron say? 'What a good party, Mum', says Karen when her mother comes to fetch her.

There is a case for presenting cosy, familiar situations to very small children but is this the fare for six-year-olds? One solution to the problem of the audience for these stories might be that they are intended for mothers to read aloud in order to initiate their offspring into the rituals of the playground or parties, but it seems unlikely. Perhaps they would be useful as early reading texts but it is doubtful whether the young reader would be as encouraged to persevere because he recognized the scenario as he would be if he were curious to discover the outcome of the plot. It would be unkind to suggest that the books have a purpose in reassuring Mum that all children are the same really, even the black ones who have moved next door.

The aims of the series to which *Seven of Us* and *Gypsy Family* belong are more clearly defined. They are "about real families in Britain from different cultural backgrounds (with the emphasis on individuals rather than cultures). They are dialectic, wanting to impart information as well as to mould attitudes. *Seven of Us* is about the Crossfield family, Mum, Daddy, and Auntie who were born in Jamaica, and the children who were born here. Its strength is that it does not gloss

over the difficulties the family meets, including prejudice and the conflicting emotions the children feel about their heritage and their commitments. "I feel West Indian and English," says sixteen-year-old Lawrence, and thirteen-year-old Monica was homesick when she went to the West Indies on a visit. Not all the clues in the pictures are picked up, for example, the significance, if any, of Lawrence wearing a Rastafarian wooden hat in one photograph but the narrative arranged by Alex Henley is skilful in treating complicated issues at a level children of primary school age will be able to feel and to understand.

In her contribution to the same series, *Gypsy Family*, Mary Watson probably has a harder time explaining the life-style of the Travellers. She is not as adept at mixing the everyday descriptions of life in the caravan with the reasons why gypsies live as they do. It might have been better if she had spent out more clearly past and present attitudes to gypsies. However, the series promises well and these books would be read with interest by the under-twelves at home or in school. The only caveat might be that in a really multi-cultural society, in addition to showing a Sikh, a Chinese, a Cypriot family, I would include a Cockney and a Geordie one, too.

Just as cultural differences need taking about with children does physical and mental handicap. The Warnock Committee is heeded, children at school may grow more used to having handicapped children in their midst. *Janet at School* shows a girl with spina bifida at her local school with her friends in lessons in the playground and even in the gym. From the beginning Paul White establishes the right positive, unpatronizing tone of voice, caring but matter-of-fact: "Janet's just arrived at school and she's hanging up her coat. She needs her wheelchair because she can't use her legs." This book will be read to advantage in school and out of school, and by adults as well as the children for whom it is intended since they also often need preparing for their first encounter with the handicapped. Far too few of us are at ease in our dealings with

handicapped people.

The House Where Jack Lives is again about a child who does not lead the life of the majority. Jack lives in a Children's Home. In the frontispiece it is explained that a Children's Home is for children whose parents are unable to look after them "because of illness or some social problem" and this is the very simple level of the text: "We live with Mr and Mrs Brown. We're not brothers and sisters. We are here because our own mums and dads can't look after us". The story stresses the similarities of life for children who are "in care" rather than the differences and does not attempt to probe or explain the reasons why some children are in this situation, or the feelings they may have. It is aimed at very young children who live near or go to school with children from such a home, but there is a great need for stories which will help the children who are away from their own families, whether for a short or a long time, to understand what has happened and their own emotions. Literature has long been used for therapy and, if sensitively handled, stories, whether true or imaginary, are an ideal means to enable children to talk about painful subjects and to ask questions which they might not otherwise have the opportunity or the confidence to raise.

JOAN SOLOMON: *Kate's Party* (241 89780 7). *Spud Comes to Play* (241 897 815). Photographs by Richard Harvey. Hamish Hamilton. £2.25 each.

ALEX HENLEY: *Seven of Us*. Photographs by Jeremy Finlay. A. and C. Black. £1.95, (713 61830 2).

MARY WATSON: *Gypsy Family*. Photographs by Jeremy Finlay. A. and C. Black. £1.95, (713 61831 0).

PAUL WHITE: *Janet at School*. Photographs by Jeremy Finlay. A. and C. Black. £1.95, (713 61821 3).

MARGARET CROMPTON: *The House Where Jack Lives*. Illustrated by Gill Rodley Head. £1.95, (370 30027 0).

Sarah Curtis

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PHOTOGRAPHY

The camera in the streets

By Peter Keating

JOY FLUKINGER, LARRY SCHAFF and STANISH MACHAN: *Victorian Photographs*. 200pp. 146 photographs. Gordon Fraser. £15.

In his autobiographical introduction to *Victorian Snapshots* (1939) Paul Martin admitted that if he had had "independent means" he would probably have pursued exactly the same roads as the other pictorial workers of the nineties. His ambition it was to make his photographs look as much like a painted picture as they could. Lacking the money that successful pictorialism demanded, Martin turned instead to the "real snapshot" that is the work of the man on the street. He secured for himself a lasting place in the history of photography.

Martin's importance has not been completely ignored in recent years—*Victorian Snapshots* was reissued by an American publisher in 1972 and Bill Jay's *Victorian Camera* (1973) drew attention to both the life and the work. The Paul Martin: *Victorian Photographer* is the first full-length modern study in which a sustained attempt has been made to evaluate the precise nature of his contribution to photography. Drawing on the resources of the Gersheim photographic collection at the University of Texas, the three authors of this book adopt a variety of different approaches to Martin's work. It is biographically, critically, and historically. This particular combination is totally appropriate.

Although appreciation of Martin's photographs is not dependent on historical knowledge, he was very much a man of his time, and the various stages of his career seem to have taken the form they did through chance or circumstance. This conscious planning.

Martin was born in France in 1864, and together with his family emigrated to England after the age of Paris. In 1880 he was apprenticed to a wood-engraver and in the date and the occupation were as Roy Flukinger and Larry Schaff point out, special interest in Martin's development as a photographer. Woodcut illustrations, often copied from photographs, still provided at this time the main visual element in popular culture, and the "woodcutters" as the engravers were known, can be regarded as the immediate predecessors of our modern photo-journalists. Their skill, called for by technical, practical, and economic factors, was the ability to interpret or change desired images as the occasion demanded. Martin excelled as a woodcutter, and many of his early photographs were probably taken through the intention of transforming them into line illustrations for periodicals. An example from 1892 appears in the book. Martin's photo-

graph is of a group of boys fishing on a river bank. In the wooden on the boys are standing in the same positions but the group is smaller with the half-concealed figures having been removed to make the overall scene sharper. The fishing net has been changed into a pole which is being used to steer two picturesque sailing boats on the river.

In March 1880, just a few months before Martin signed his apprenticeship papers, the New York *Daily Graphic* published the first full-toned reproduction of a photograph, and although the image was crude it obviously marked a technical breakthrough that was eventually to bring about the decline of the woodcutters as central figures in the field of mass communications. Statistics quoted by Flukinger and Schaff show that between the years 1884 and 1899 the number of wood-engraving firms in London was halved while process-engraving firms increased tenfold. An analysis of the illustrations used by leading journals in five countries in 1899 revealed that nearly two-thirds were half-tone reproductions of photographs. Looking back at this period of his life Martin was later to claim that his engraving training had not dramatically photography was to affect their lives, but that he himself knew the "apart" was about to grow into a "monster." "When the monster made a lunge at me I dodged him and clung to his tail."

What made it possible for Martin to hang on to the monster's tail at all was the startlingly rapid technological changes in the 1880s that led to the commercial production of cheap hand-held cameras. Flukinger and Schaff offer a fascinating survey of these developments—also do Brian Coe and Paul Gates in a recently published paperback *The Snapshot Photograph* (Ash and Grant, £3.95)—and they show how the popular demand for cheap cameras helped to create a new division between different schools of photographers. In the snapshot was easy, cheap, and therefore unartistic. It was also sneaky, and acknowledged as such by the manufacturers, who produced a bewildering range of tiny cameras hidden in watches, walking sticks, books, and dummy revolvers. Martin's own favourite was a "Racine Hand Camera". It was hardly small as a "detective" camera went, and Martin possessed the technical knowledge to modify the mechanism to suit his own purposes, but even so it came disguised as a brown paper parcel which could be tucked innocently under the arm.

Cartoonists of the 1880s and 1890s responded enthusiastically to this new social phenomenon. In one cartoon reproduced from an early number of *The Amateur Photographer* Edwin has enticed Angelina to a shady corner of romantic Cookham. "Oh, dear heart, I'm POSITIVE you love me. Don't reply in the NEGATIVE," he impetuously says, and Angelina, carefully to give her answer as the

mused members of an amateur photography club advance to "snap" the pretty scene. Zoom lenses have made this kind of "real-life" snooping less dangerous for the photographer, but attitudes changed all that much. In 1898 the *British Journal of Photography* refused to sympathize with some "hand camera fiends" who had been rough-handed for taking snaps of "ladies as they emerge from their morning dip at the sea-side". Snapshot photography was not only dangerous, it could be illegal as well, with official permits being needed before cameras could be taken into some public places in London.

It is hardly surprising, given these various attitudes and feelings, that many photographers were determined to retreat as far as possible from the contamination of the snapshot, and some interesting examples of the lengths to which they would go to make their work "look as much like a painted picture as they could" have recently been on show at the exhibition "Pictorial Photography in Britain 1900-1920" at the Hayward Gallery in London. Hostility to the snapshot was one of Martin's finest within camera clubs, not all of which were as insensitive as the one that stalked poor Edwin and Angelina. Martin was a founder member of the West Surrey Photographic Society, and George Davison (who took the famous impressionist photograph "The Onion Field") and Colonel George Gale, a leading pictorialist, who was once asked if he had tried the new hand-held cameras. He replied: "I have not descended to that level yet."

It is probably true that Martin would have followed the pictorialists if he had been able to afford to do so—his taste for photographic gimmickry was highly and commercially developed—but this by itself does not explain why he was so successful with his snapshots of working-class and street life. Flukinger and Schaff suggest a variety of reasons, including the wood-engraving background and a keen eye for the working-class people, and both are factors to be taken into account. But perhaps the most convincing explanation is that he was simply searching for something new in photography and street scenes provided him with a strong personal and technical stimulus. He was a man who possessed an intuitive understanding of its capabilities. He turned to the subjects literally nearest at hand, to the streets and parks during the working week and the seaside during holidays, to in effect the very world scorned by the pictorialists. As long as this challenge was forced upon him—and Flukinger and Schaff suggest 1892-98 as Martin's only great period of photography in life that lasted for eight years—then he produced pictures which remain startlingly fresh and which put to shame most of the painted hybrids of the pictorialists. When the challenge declined, the freshness went with it.

The word "snapshot" was adapted from photography from the terminology of hunting, and it signifies the same in both activities—the split-second capturing of life, though with the important difference that while the successful hunter turns life into death, the successful photographic image seems merely a temporary stop, an acknowledgment that life is made up of millions of split seconds. It is this kind of understanding that Martin's photographs convey.

His roadside vendors and tradesmen are photographed from their ordinary day-to-day businesses—the cutter is intent on sharpening a knife, the flower-seller urges a bunch of flowers on passers-by, the "general dealer" with no customers in sight rearranges his tray of household wares, a porter staggers half-buried beneath a truss of straw. The genuineness of these snapshots is enhanced by the street backgrounds of shops and pedestrians, the natural activities of secondary figures, and the backs of carts loaded with barrels and boxes. Rarely do the principal subjects of the photographs seem aware of the camera; they themselves are parts of the life going on around them. And this is true of both the public

and private scenes, of the coster girls dancing on Hampstead Heath and the couples necking on the Yarmouth sands, of the shabbily dressed children gathering round a policeman's funeral and the more respectably dressed father and daughter feeding a swan in Victoria Park.

Some of the photographs capture exceptional moments, such as a woman being rescued from an overturned street cab or, even more memorably, a policeman making an arrest, with the two figures, one in a helmet, the other in a bowler, marching solemnly into the camera. There are spectacular shots of waves breaking over the promenade at Hastings, and there are some very attractive snaps of the kind depicted by the *British Journal of Photography*—of women clinging to ropes attached to "bloomers" girls walking along the quay at Boulogne, and of two fully clad Victorian ladies tip-toeing cautiously to the water's edge. Few photographers have captured as effectively as Martin the activities of children in the London streets, and Flukinger and Schaff rapine some splendid examples. Often ragged and barefooted, though nearly always wearing hats or caps, there are children dancing to barrel-organ music and around an improvised puppet show, and one is drinking at water fountains, waiting for official permission to paddle in a park lake, looking after younger brothers and sisters.

Martin once said that a major problem of taking street photographs was caused by children who would fling themselves in front of the camera calling "Take me, guv'nor". Clearly he soon learnt how to handle this situation: as most of the children in his photographs are taking no notice of him at all, yet, paradoxically, the most notable of his snapshots are those of children. Three streeturchins, dirty and poorly clothed, stand in a line, their shadows falling on to the pavement; the background is a plain brick wall. All three children are natural copies of Martin though uncertain of what exactly he is doing. One of them clutches a coat to his chin, half-protectively like a baby with a comforter, while the third, set apart from his friends, his head pushed firmly to one side and his hands thrust into shirt pockets, establishes a pose that is at once child-like and glamorously adult. It is a picture of astonishing beauty.

It is also, along with many of these photographs, a devastating comment on late-Victorian urban poverty, and it makes its criticism, perhaps, all the more strongly because it was almost certainly taken with little intention of stirring social consciences or drawing attention to a national disgrace. Flukinger and Schaff admit that when they began their research into Martin's life and work they expected to portray him as someone with similar interests to Mayhew or Jacob Riis, but what they discovered led them to change their minds and in this they are surely right. It is chance again that such a valuable documentary source as these photographs should have survived to serve that purpose at all.

Flukinger and Schaff suggest that Martin's name in photographic circles and to do this he needed to come up with a new idea. He found that by taking snapshots in the streets and then blocking out the backgrounds he could produce slides of his principal characters frozen like statues, the porter and the flower-seller looked more pictureque like this and they could be projected on to a screen more effectively when removed from the setting that made full sense of what they were doing. As Martin himself wrote: "Knowing beforehand that the backgrounds were eventually to be blocked out, it did not matter much whether the backgrounds were appropriate." He went even further than this denial of any social intent: "Had I been more fortunately situated I would have made a set of slides of animals at the zoo," they would, I think, be a pity."

Martin's cut-out figures were a great success and he was always proud of them. Two years later, searching once again for something

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The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the Goldsmiths College Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

NORTH EAST LONDON
POLYTECHNIC

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the North East London Polytechnic Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

MANCHESTER BUSINESS
SCHOOL

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the Manchester Business School Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

WEST SUSSEX
COUNTY COUNCIL

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the West Sussex County Council Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

EAST LOTHIAN
DISTRICT COUNCIL

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the East Lothian District Council Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

QUEEN MARY COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the Queen Mary College Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

CENTRAL REGIONAL
COUNCIL

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the Central Regional Council Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.

Closing date: July 21, 1978.

WALSALL LIBRARY AND
MUSEUM SERVICES

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the Walsall Library and Museum Services.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

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Closing date: 17th July, 1978.

WEST SUSSEX
COUNTY COUNCIL

LIBRARIAN

Applications are invited for the post of Librarian in the West Sussex County Council Library.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library and will be expected to work with a wide variety of people.

Further details are available from Mrs. Farrar, Hospital Librarian, Crowthorne 3111, extension 385.

Application forms available from the Personnel Department, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne 3111, ext. 276.</